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Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Eleventh session

New York, 12–14 June 2018

Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 12 June 2018 at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Panayotov ..... (Bulgaria)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 4: Election of the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (*continued*) (CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1 and CRPD/CSP/2018/Rev.1/Add.1)

1. **The President** said that, as three vacancies remained to be filled, a second round of voting would be held, restricted to the six candidates who had received the largest number of votes while not obtaining the required majority.

2. *At the invitation of the President, Ms. Hillebrandt (Bahamas), Ms. Balogh (Hungary), Ms. Sola (Germany), Ms. Maitsi (Lesotho) and Ms. Deegan (Palau) acted as tellers.*

3. *A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

Number of ballot papers:	175
Number of valid ballots:	175
Number of representatives voting:	175
Required majority:	88
Number of votes obtained:	
Ms. Gabrilli (Brazil)	103
Ms. Utami (Indonesia)	92
Ms. Gamio Ríos (Mexico)	90
Mr. You (China)	77
Ms. Ifill (Barbados)	77
Mr. Parra Dussan (Colombia)	63

4. *Having obtained the required majority, Ms. Gabrilli (Brazil), Ms. Utami (Indonesia) and Ms. Gamio Ríos (Mexico) were elected as members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.*

Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (*continued*)

(a) General debate (*continued*)

5. **Ms. Krentovska** (Ukraine) said that the President, Government and parliament of Ukraine were committed to the ensuring that civil society initiatives related to human rights and disability reflected the principle of "nothing about us without us". She expressed gratitude to the United Nations for its fruitful cooperation on disability issues, in particular during her Government's presentation of its initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/UKR/1). Ukraine had adopted an action plan to implement the recommendations contained in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/UKR/CO/1).

6. The aggression in Donbass and the temporary occupation of the Ukrainian Crimea had challenged the Ukrainian Government, civil society and Ukrainian citizens, and the war had affected persons with disabilities most of all. There were 60,000 internally displaced persons with disabilities, including wounded servicemen. Military actions had had a negative impact on the social and economic situation in the country, with repercussions for social budgetary provisions.

7. In September 2017, the parliament of Ukraine had adopted a law establishing the right to inclusive education for people with special education needs. As part of the ongoing deinstitutionalization reform in Ukraine, the Government had allocated funds for the establishment of methodological centres to promote inclusion in schools and had introduced a system of early intervention services for children with disabilities up to 4 years of age, in order to avoid placing them in specialized residential institutions. Comprehensive piloting of those initiatives had begun in 2017 and 13 methodological centres were expected to be established by the end of 2018.

8. Using an integrated approach, the Government was developing social and rehabilitation services in the territorial communities established as part of the decentralization reform that had been taking place in Ukraine since 2015. That reform had provided the territorial communities with greater financial resources and had enabled the development of community-based social services and the adaptation of infrastructure and transport to the needs of persons with disabilities, areas in which municipalities were encouraged to step up their efforts. In addition, in 2018, the Government had introduced new budget programmes providing transport services for persons with disabilities and small group homes for children with disabilities.

9. **Ms. Mercado** (Denmark) said that, in 2009, Denmark had ratified the Convention, which provided a powerful framework for developing policy on disability issues. The participation of all people, regardless of their age, gender, origin, sexuality or disability status, was required in order to achieve diverse and inclusive societies. In that connection, her Government had recently adopted a law prohibiting — both within and outside the labour market — direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and reprisals on the basis of disability.

10. The Government of Denmark was committed to expanding access to the labour market for persons with disabilities. As a supplement to the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations high-level political forum on sustainable

development, in 2017 the Government had launched a national action plan for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The action plan included the goal of increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, which contributed towards ensuring quality education, promoting decent work and economic growth, and reducing inequalities. A small increase in the employment rate for persons with disabilities had already been registered in Denmark.

11. A broad range of measures was being developed to monitor progress made by Denmark in implementing the 2030 Agenda and its national development goals. For example, the national statistical agency Statistics Denmark would soon launch a platform reflecting the progress achieved towards 100 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, with data on the remaining indicators to be compiled in due course. New data and results related to the implementation of the Goals would be published in August 2018.

12. The Ministry for Children and Social Affairs of Denmark was working to improve annual indicators on persons receiving social assistance, including persons with disabilities. Such indicators, together with the adaptation of national and international development goals to needs at the local level, would enable municipal councils to effect direct change.

13. **Ms. Villalobos** (El Salvador) said that the National Council for Comprehensive Support for Persons with Disabilities of El Salvador, the primary body responsible for monitoring and evaluating implementation both of the Convention and of national policy on persons with disabilities, had agreed with the Ministry of Finance to include a provision in the general regulations on budgetary formulation requiring public institutions to allocate budgetary resources for programmes that protected the rights of persons with disabilities in the areas of health, education, employment and social protection. In addition, the FOMILENIO II project provided for the establishment of educational centres with accessibility features and the construction of accessible walkways as part of the coastal highway expansion initiative.

14. Since 2009, El Salvador had been promoting reforms and regulations designed to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and eradicate discrimination on the basis of disability status, with a focus on education, health, employment, accessibility and participation. The development of women and children with disabilities was a particular challenge. To that end, teacher training and initiatives to improve the capacity of schools to support the sustained enrolment of children with disabilities were being conducted. Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, together with representatives of various productive sectors in El Salvador, had recently signed a national employment pact with the goal of increasing the employability of persons with disabilities and promoting decent work opportunities.

15. With the participation of the Executive Technical Unit of the justice sector of El Salvador, and with technical and financial support from the Regional Project on Human Rights and Democracy, led by the Pan American Development Foundation, and from a disability-related organization in Guatemala, an assessment had been carried out to assist the criminal justice administration systems of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in improving access to justice for persons with disabilities. El Salvador also had a body responsible for monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals relating to education, decent work, health, poverty reduction, gender equality and access to basic services.

16. **Ms. Bogopane-Zulu** (South Africa) said that the Conference of States Parties had inspired her delegation to find innovative ways to accelerate implementation of the Convention and the upcoming centenary of the births of Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu would provide an opportunity for South Africa to renew its commitment to the values embodied by the two leaders of the country's liberation struggle. Her Government appreciated the support demonstrated for the candidacy of South Africa for non-permanent membership of the Security Council beginning in 2019. During its term on the Council, South Africa would work to advance African interests, in particular the goal of silencing guns — a leading cause of disabilities in Africa — by 2020, in line with the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

17. The adoption at the thirtieth African Union summit of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa had heralded a new era for persons with disabilities on the continent. The Protocol, which included measures to ensure the protection and safety of such persons in situations of risk and to reduce the impact of economic vulnerability on their quality of life, would be a priority for her country during its term on the Security Council. South Africa had taken initial steps to ratify the Protocol and would incorporate it, together with the Convention, into its domestic legislation in the coming years.

18. South Africa had recently finalized national frameworks on reasonable accommodation and on

universal access and design for persons with disabilities, which would guide the development of new legislation, as well as the review and establishment of minimum norms and standards in that regard. A national framework on self-representation by persons with disabilities would also be finalized in 2018.

19. South Africa attached priority to the disaggregation of data by disability status as a means of informing programme planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation within fiscal constraints. Her Government continued to develop its Disability Inequality Index, which, beginning in 2018, would include financial data.

20. Public-private partnerships, whether aimed at promoting regulatory measures or corporate social investment, were important for accelerating implementation of the Convention. One such partnership, led by a South Africa-based telecommunications company, had resulted in the roll-out of accessible multimedia information and communications technology (ICT) centres in over 40 schools and community youth centres, which had improved educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

21. Following the conclusion in early 2018 of the arbitration process for the Life Esidimeni tragedy, in which 143 persons with psychosocial disabilities had passed away, the arbitrator had awarded significant constitutional damages to survivors and the families of the deceased. As a corrective measure, the Government was thoroughly reviewing electoral legislation and related processes in order to identify limitations faced by persons with disabilities. Appropriate recourse against injustice for persons with disabilities was guaranteed under the justice system.

22. The fact that no women had been elected to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016 had undermined States parties' commitments to gender equality. States must therefore take into account the need for gender parity in proposing candidates for future elections. In that connection, the recent election to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women of Ms. Ana Peláez Narváez, Vice President of the European Disability Forum, should encourage States parties to promote the equal participation of women with disabilities at the national level.

23. The recent increase in human rights violations against persons with albinism in South Africa had led the Government to re-examine the measures in place to protect their rights. Law enforcement officials had been responding rapidly to abductions, murders and the theft of human remains, and awareness campaigns had multiplied. Moreover, South Africa would fully implement the 2017–2021 Regional Action Plan on Albinism in Africa.

24. In conclusion, her delegation supported the calls by States parties at recent sessions of the Conference to review the Conference agenda in order to increase its focus on outcomes for the United Nations system as a whole.

25. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that his Government had requested relevant federal ministries to draft the laws needed to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, following the Committee's consideration of his country's initial report on implementation of the Convention at its nineteenth session (CRPD/C/RUS/1).

26. In its follow-up work, his Government would particularly focus on promoting further deinstitutionalization and assisting persons with complex mental disorders to exercise their legal capacity. It was continuing to overhaul the comprehensive rehabilitation system, including through measures to improve the accessibility of rehabilitation services and to assist families of children with disabilities. A nationwide organization to support parents of children with mental disabilities had also been established. In addition, the Government was promoting early intervention services, social support, assisted living and employment assistance for persons with disabilities and was focusing on improving the arrangements in place for caregiving and the provision of social services for persons with disabilities. A plan to provide vocational training and employment assistance to youth with disabilities by 2020 was being developed. Moreover, the national programme on accessibility, for which an unprecedented level of funding had been allocated, had been extended from 2020 to 2025.

27. In preparing national legislation to implement the Convention, the Government would pay special attention to the issues raised by the Committee in its recommendations, particular with regard to employment for persons with disabilities. Information from the Committee on the best practices used by other countries for the implementation of the Convention would also be welcome.

28. **Mr. Carroll** (Observer for Disabled Peoples' International) said that his organization promoted the human rights of persons with disabilities, with an emphasis on full participation, equal opportunities and development. It was the only global cross-disability organization of persons with disability with a presence

in six regions worldwide and in which all types of disabilities were represented.

29. To achieve the goals of leaving no one behind, promoting equal recognition of persons with disabilities before the law, and empowering women and girls with disabilities, States parties must eliminate discrimination and make reasonable accommodations, as required under the Convention. Furthermore, under article 33 of the Convention, organizations representing persons with disabilities were responsible for holding States parties to account for fulfilling their obligations.

30. While commending the 177 States that had ratified the Convention and acknowledging the implementation efforts undertaken, he emphasized the need to eliminate the remaining physical, social, legal, attitudinal, medical and cultural barriers faced by persons with disabilities, in particular in the global South, as such barriers hindered implementation of the Convention and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. His organization was committed to monitoring and facilitating progress towards removing those barriers, starting at the current session of the Conference, where participants with disabilities had faced constraints owing to limited conference room space and the issuance of grounds passes at prohibitively early hours. Failure to make reasonable accommodations at future Conferences would undermine States parties' commitment to leaving no one behind.

31. **Ms. Demir** (Belgium) said that Belgium was committed to leaving no one behind, in line with the Convention and the 2030 Agenda, and to mainstreaming disability in policies at all levels. Systematically assessing the impact of decisions on disability issues nevertheless remained a challenge. Given the critical importance of investment and political commitment in ensuring full participation, her Government had established social protection schemes, as well as financial and fiscal advantages, for persons with disabilities, and had provided support for their inclusion in the areas of education, employment and leisure.

32. To promote awareness of disability issues, the political participation of persons with disabilities should be increased, a particularly pressing challenge in view of the upcoming elections in Belgium in 2018 and 2019, and the European Parliament elections in 2019. The National High Council for Persons with Disabilities had recently presented a position paper on elections and, for the first time, persons with visual impairment would be able to vote independently in the upcoming local elections in Belgium using an audio module.

33. Particular attention should be paid to accessibility and the needs of women and girls with disabilities, who often faced multiple forms of discrimination and were twice as likely as their male counterparts to be victims of violence and sexual abuse. In that connection, her Government had co-organized a side event to the Conference during which the topic of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls with disabilities would be addressed.

34. Fair representation of persons with disabilities and equitable gender balance in the membership of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities must be ensured. Belgium was preparing its second report on implementation of the Convention and welcomed the simplified reporting procedure adopted by the Committee in 2013. The Committee's evaluation of the second report of Belgium and the contributions of civil society and the independent mechanism established pursuant to article 33 of the Convention would help to guide future implementation efforts.

35. **Mr. Bahari** (Kenya) said that his Government, in conjunction with the Government of the United Kingdom and the International Disability Alliance, would host the first ever Global Disability Summit in London in July 2018.

36. The principle of universal social participation was enshrined in his country's Constitution. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection was responsible for implementing the Convention, in collaboration with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. The Government had enacted policies and legislation to promote the empowerment of persons with disabilities, including quota schemes to ensure their access to employment and government procurement opportunities; tax relief and social protection schemes; grants for income-generating programmes; and provisions for enhanced access to health-care services and education. However, more needed to be done to address the needs of persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities.

37. As part of the newly launched education sector policy for learners and trainees with disabilities, the President of Kenya had directed the Ministry of Education and the National Treasury to develop a plan to establish centres of excellence in order to facilitate early identification, assessment, placement and referral of children with disabilities. In addition, to facilitate inclusive planning, the Government had incorporated the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability in its 2019 housing and population census. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics had also established a committee, 70 per cent of whose members were persons with disabilities or representatives of

related organizations. Kenya remained committed to the full implementation of the Convention, although funding remained an obstacle to ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the implementation and monitoring process.

38. **Ms. Gamlin** (India) said that the commitment to leaving no one behind was critical to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. With one in five of the world's poorest people living with disabilities, the degree of empowerment of persons with disabilities was a touchstone for measuring the inclusiveness of social and economic progress. Efforts must be made to capitalize on areas of synergy between the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals, including the promotion of equal opportunities for, and non-discrimination against, persons with disabilities, in particular women and children, and the mainstreaming of accessibility requirements.

39. In 1995, India had enacted specific legislation to fulfil its constitutional mandate of ensuring freedom, justice and equality for all individuals, including persons with disabilities. It had also been among the first countries to ratify the Convention. The Prime Minister of India was committed to broadening awareness and eliminating the social stigma faced by persons with disabilities, having coined a Hindi term meaning "persons with divine qualities" to refer to them.

40. In 2017, India had adopted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, which expanded the definition of disability to include developmental, intellectual and locomotor disabilities, as well as hearing and visual impairment. The Act established quotas for the employment of persons with disabilities, and for their enrolment in educational institutions and inclusion in poverty alleviation schemes. It also provided for the allotment of land for housing for persons with disabilities; the provision of loans at concessional interest rates to help them start businesses; and the formulation by the Government of standards of accessibility for built environments, transportation, ICT and public services. Public-private partnerships had proven effective in ensuring the employment of persons with disabilities. In addition, in 2015 the Prime Minister had launched a campaign to create barrier-free access for persons with disabilities to public and virtual spaces.

41. In line with its commitment to ensuring the accessibility of health-care and early intervention services, the Government had recently launched a national health protection scheme that provided health insurance coverage for persons with disabilities. During the previous four years, the Government had distributed aids and assistive devices to approximately 1 million persons with disabilities. It was also providing support for cochlear implant surgery for hearing-impaired children, and had established scholarship programmes for students with disabilities pursuing professional and technical studies. Moreover, a research and training centre for Indian Sign Language had been established and a dictionary of Indian Sign Language containing 3,000 words had been developed.

42. In 2016, India had become the first country to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled, and had established an online library of accessible books. Efforts were also being made to adapt yoga and traditional Indian medicine to support the well-being of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, a national database for the issuance of unique identification cards for persons with disabilities was being developed.

43. India was committed to enabling persons with disabilities to lead lives of dignity and purpose and to contribute to national social and economic development. Prior to the Conference, a side event had been held commemorating 50 years of the Jaipur foot, a prosthetic leg developed in India that had helped millions worldwide. During the Conference, his delegation would participate in another side event highlighting the role of mobile technology in empowering persons with disabilities.

44. **Ms. Dembélé** (Burkina Faso) said that, in ratifying the Convention and its Optional Protocol in 2009, her Government had demonstrated political will at the highest level to promote social inclusion and reduce inequality, in line with the National Economic and Social Development Plan 2016–2018.

45. With technical and financial support from its development partners, the Government had established a State secretariat to support persons with disabilities, as well as a multisectoral national council to protect their rights, which had an operational standing secretariat. In 2018, the Cabinet had adopted the official report of Burkina Faso on the implementation of the Convention, which would soon be submitted to the United Nations. In addition, civil service examinations for persons with disabilities had been organized; over $5 million had been invested between 2013 and 2017 to support the needs of persons with disabilities; and a general census focusing on children with disabilities had been conducted in 2013. A national forum on the socioeconomic empowerment of persons with disabilities was also planned.

46. Bilateral and multilateral partners, together with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), must provide increased support for the efforts of the national ministry on disability, inter alia: to ensure the economic empowerment of 40,000 persons with disabilities by 2020; to conduct a general population and housing census in 2018; and to establish and implement a national framework to support the employment of persons with disabilities.

47. **Mr. Clarke** (Observer for the European Disability Forum) expressed gratitude to the Bureau of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for its engagement with the disability movement in organizing the Conference. The European Disability Forum, an independent NGO led by persons with disabilities and their families, represented the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities and their representative organizations. Ireland had ratified the Convention in March 2018, resulting in universal ratification within the European Union. All European Union member States must translate their commitments into action and all States parties must withdraw their reservations and interpretative declarations in order to fully implement the Convention.

48. The engagement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, through such events as the annual civil society forum that preceded the Conference, was essential to the implementation of the Convention. Regional integration organizations, in particular the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), had a key role to play in ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. All such organizations must ratify the Convention as a matter of priority in order to strengthen harmonization of laws and policies, as well as cooperation in implementation and monitoring, at the regional level. In their national budgets and in international cooperation, States parties must allocate financial resources in support of persons with disabilities; promote the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities; ensure the legal capacity and equal recognition before the law of persons with disabilities; and enhance accessibility.

49. **Mr. Skaug** (Norway) said that the Convention provided an international framework for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities to personal development, participation and self-realization. Persons with disabilities must play a role in developing the policies and programmes that affected them and in ensuring that disability issues were mainstreamed, particularly in the Sustainable Development Goals. Continued efforts to combat negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities and promote awareness of disability issues were also required. Furthermore, improving the quality and comparability of disability statistics was critical to monitoring progress towards inclusion. Lastly, for women and girls with disabilities to be empowered and included in society, it was vital to ensure their equal access to education, employment and justice, and their equal recognition before the law.

50. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka) said that, in order to ensure that no one was left behind, high-quality disability statistics and disaggregated data by disability status would greatly facilitate policymaking and the effective and efficient allocation of resources.

51. In Sri Lanka, persons with disabilities accounted for 8.7 per cent of the population. While his country had only ratified the Convention in 2016, it had adopted national legislation in 1996 covering the issues of rehabilitation, education, employment and health for persons with disabilities and it had established a national council and a national secretariat for persons with disabilities. National action plans focusing on employment, accessibility, vocational training and community-based rehabilitation for persons with disabilities, as well as special programmes benefiting women and children with disabilities, were also in place. Furthermore, guided by the criteria set out in the Convention, the recently launched National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2017–2021 built on existing disability initiatives, providing for, inter alia, greater infrastructural accessibility and enhanced awareness.

52. **Mr. Dusel** (Germany) said that Germany had stepped up its efforts to implement the Convention in recent years, both at the national level and in its international cooperation. The quality of life of persons with disabilities in Germany had improved as a result of the recent amendment to the Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons Act and the adoption of the Federal Participation Act, whereby persons with disabilities no longer had to submit several applications to different benefit agencies, and, when they claimed benefits, their partners' income was no longer taken into account. New job opportunities for persons with disabilities were also being created in companies. Furthermore, pursuant to the Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons Act, an arbitration service had been established within the office of the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Relating to Persons with Disabilities, which would enable the out-of-court settlement of disputes on accessibility matters between persons with disabilities and public sector bodies.

53. More than half of the measures established under the second national action plan for implementation of

the Convention had been carried out. Implementation of the Convention ranked high on the Government's agenda and the second plan would be updated to include a focus on enhancing the access of persons with disabilities to digital technologies, in particular in the workplace, and on establishing an integrated, efficient and service-oriented public administration, in accordance with the principle of "nothing about us without us". Moreover, under the national development policy, increased funding was being provided for ICT, in line with the 2030 Agenda.

54. Lastly, in view of the importance of representation at the local and international levels, he welcomed the election at the current session of the Conference of several women to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and encouraged States parties to restore gender balance on the Committee in future elections.

55. **Mr. Makni** (Observer for the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions) said that national human rights institutions played a critical role in monitoring the implementation of the Convention, which included developing monitoring frameworks, advising States on how to meet their monitoring obligations and ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

56. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Global Alliance had held their first joint meeting in February 2018 in order to share experiences in a number of areas, including the collection of disaggregated-data; the elaboration of a framework to improve outcomes for persons with disabilities; the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into monitoring methodologies; and the development of guidance for national human rights institutions to monitor progress in the implementation of the Convention.

57. That joint meeting had concluded with the adoption of a landmark joint declaration setting out a road map to strengthen cooperation between the Committee, national human rights institutions and the Global Alliance in monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide. Accordingly, the Committee and the Global Alliance had resolved: to establish a follow-up group to develop a common framework for monitoring article 19 of the Convention; to advocate for strengthened data collection; to invite the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in cooperation with national human rights institutions and their networks, to develop and maintain a repository of good practices for monitoring implementation of the Convention and continue strengthening the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities; and to request that international development cooperation efforts, through capacity-building programmes, should focus on enhancing and promoting the role of national human rights institutions and independent monitoring frameworks in monitoring the Convention.

58. **Mr. Sauer** (Finland) said that his Government stood ready to support efforts to ensure system-wide respect for the rights of persons with disabilities. His Government had recently published a national plan consisting of 80 actions to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The plan provided tools and indicators to implement the provisions of the Convention, and relevant actors, including organizations of persons with disabilities, would monitor and report on the implementation process.

59. The data collected via the 2017 national School Health Promotion study, which was partially based on the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, revealed that children and youth with disabilities faced more discrimination and bullying than other people. His Government would use that data to develop relevant policies. Data on women and girls with disabilities, who often fell victim to multiple forms of discrimination, were also needed. Collective action should be taken to ensure that they had access to affordable, high-quality services in order to exercise their sexual and reproductive health rights.

60. **Mr. Torem** (Israel) said that much had changes in the lives of persons with disabilities in Israel since the adoption of the Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in 1998, including substantial improvements in accessibility, educational achievements and participation in employment. Most important of all, Israeli society had become much more aware of the rights of persons with disabilities.

61. Israel had a long tradition of grass-roots movements and activism, with disability activists and NGOs spearheading many initiatives to ensure inclusion and accessibility and to combat discrimination. Persons with disabilities were now involved in all changes to legislation and regulations, and policymakers and inspectors were working diligently to correct the lack of inclusive and accessible environments at the local and national levels.

62. Over the past year his Government had enacted specific regulations to promote mainstream schooling, thereby safeguarding fundamental rights and ensuring that no one would be left behind. It had also developed legislation and programmes to foster equal opportunity employment and was fully committed to meeting the relevant targets that had been set.

63. Major challenges lay ahead, but strong societies were built on equal rights, opportunities and inclusion. To inspire real social change and achieve full and equal rights for all people, the international community should work together.

64. **Mr. Rubisch** (Austria) said that his Government was committed to the full implementation of the Convention on the basis of its National Action Plan on Disability 2012–2020. A mid-term review of that latter undertaken in 2017 had revealed that progress had been achieved in many areas.

65. Austria attached great importance to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and had taken several steps to further the implementation of the Convention. In October 2017 the Austrian Parliament had adopted a package which strengthened the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market, expanded legal remedies against discrimination on the grounds of disability and created the legal basis for quality statistics on disability. In addition, following the revision of the previous guardianship system in cooperation with persons with disabilities, a new adult protection law centred on autonomy, self-determination and decision-making guidance would soon enter into force. A study had also been initiated to examine the conditions under which persons with disabilities could be subject to violence and abuse, how such mistreatment could be prevented and what the current examples of best practice were. Lastly, to reinforce a positive image of persons with disabilities as human rights holders, his Government had created recommendations for disability-sensitive reporting in the media.

66. **Ms. Sepuloni** (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities, said that further system-wide action should be taken to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities and to ensure their challenges were addressed. Recognizing the leadership role taken by the President of the General Assembly in ensuring that meetings were both accessible and inclusive, the Group welcomed the construction work that would shortly be undertaken to improve accessibility to the General Assembly Hall and called for such measures to continue as part of an ongoing process within the United Nations.

67. As the United Nations should exemplify best practices with regard to the appropriate implementation of the Convention, discussions should extend well beyond the realm of physical accessibility to include all other elements outlined therein. The Secretary-General's new system-wide policy was commendable in that regard and would help to strengthen and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. The international community could not fulfil its promise to leave no one behind if it failed to address the unique challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Their rights should be recognized in all United Nations processes, including reforms, and in such intergovernmental negotiations as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees.

68. It was regrettable that the requirement to disaggregate data by disability had not yet been fulfilled. While the Statistical Commission had made a commendable effort to convene a group of experts to produce relevant guidelines, progress had been slow. The Group nevertheless welcomed the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability as an appropriate, broadly tested, easy-to-implement and resource-efficient way to produce internationally comparable data.

69. Persons with disabilities were well represented in the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; such representation, in addition to gender parity and equitable geographical representation, should continue.

70. **Ms. Santegoeds** (Observer for the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry), speaking also on behalf of the Centre for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, said that the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability did not take into account persons with psychosocial disabilities. Its use would therefore lead State officials and the public to believe that persons with psychosocial disabilities either did not have disabilities or that they were irrelevant. That omission left States unable to gather data on the extent to which persons with psychosocial disabilities were able to enjoy their rights and, consequently, without the tools necessary to remedy situations of rights deprivation. It was not acceptable to leave persons with psychosocial disabilities behind or to treat them as an afterthought; nor was it acceptable to assume that their needs or experiences were identical to those of other groups that would be counted.

71. It was deeply disappointing that States had not followed through with their commitments to end forced treatments, institutionalization, guardianship and substitute decision-making. Persons with psychosocial disabilities were under constant threat of being removed from their homes and placed under the control of others who had power to do whatever they wanted under the guise of "treatment". That included such inhuman and degrading treatment as the use of restraints, isolation, mind-numbing drugs and electroshock, which amounted to torture and arbitrary detention. How could States

parties to the Convention actively promote and enforce the worst kinds of abuse against persons with psychosocial disabilities?

72. Most people with psychosocial disabilities lived in poverty, and many were excluded from work due to discriminatory hiring practices and the denial of reasonable accommodation. Many remained institutionalized because there was no social assistance framework to provide housing and income, both of which were survival needs, not mental-health needs. Those issues remained isolated from mainstream disability rights policies and were generally placed under the jurisdiction of health ministries. Like other persons with disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities were not ill, and they insisted on the full enjoyment of the human rights guaranteed under the Convention.

73. Forced institutionalization and forced treatment were practiced and even authorized legally in certain countries with mental-health systems. In some cases, even in countries that had ratified the Convention, legal reform led to the expansion of options for forced treatment. A point of particular concern was the elaboration by the Council of Europe of an Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention) on the protection of the dignity and fundamental rights of persons with mental disorders with regard to involuntary treatment and placement. If adopted, the Additional Protocol would not guarantee rights or dignity; instead it would legitimize grave human-rights violations, discrimination and the ill-treatment of persons with psychosocial disabilities.

74. **Ms. Duncan** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Global Action on Disability Network, said that the Network, as a forum for the exchange of ideas, best practices and lessons learned in such priority areas as inclusive education, humanitarian action and social protection, was a concrete example of international cooperation and collective advocacy in action.

75. Disability-disaggregated data were needed urgently to be able to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, the Network supported the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability as a relatively simple, efficient and cost-effective data tool.

76. The Network strongly supported the efforts of the United Kingdom, within the framework of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, to establish a policy marker to track development financing that promoted the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities. That important mechanism also helped to identify key gaps that would inform future policy and programme development.

77. The Governments of the United Kingdom and Kenya and the members of the International Disability Alliance were demonstrating commendable leadership, both in hosting the Global Disability Summit in July 2018 and through their concrete actions to ensure that persons with disabilities were included in, and benefited equally from, sustainable development efforts.

78. **Ms. Prentice** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Turkey, said that the overarching theme of the current session and the cross-cutting focus on the importance of high-quality disability statistics were both welcome. In that context, Member States should collect and analyse disability-disaggregated data, including through the use of surveys like the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, to monitor implementation of the Convention and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

79. The interplay between poverty and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination resulted in limited agency and constrained opportunities for economic, political and social advancement for women and girls with disabilities and hindered their ability to fully enjoy their rights. More should be done to strengthen their rights and ensure their full and equal participation.

80. Their countries were committed to working together and with bilateral and multilateral partners, among others, to achieve real, sustainable progress. Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, in particular, should play a central role in the development and implementation of strong, informed, appropriate and beneficial policies and legislation.

81. Lastly, their countries welcomed efforts to improve access throughout the United Nations system for persons with disabilities, including conference facilities and service. They were committed to eliminating obstacles to accessing justice faced by persons with disabilities, to facilitating their role as direct and indirect participants, and to ensuring their ability to seek and obtain appropriate legal remedies on an equal basis with others.

82. **Mr. Portillo Romero** (Peru) said that his Government was continuing its efforts to harmonize national legislation with the principles of the Convention. To address the tightly linked dynamic of disability and poverty, a variety of social programmes

had been implemented, including free public transport and a non-contributory allowance for persons with severe disabilities in situations of extreme poverty.

83. Peru would ensure the sustainability of its disability policies by continuing to fund budgetary programmes in the areas of education, health and work. Educational policies were geared towards combatting stigmatization and misconceptions and promoting peaceful coexistence in schools. A set of guidelines for the inclusion of students with disabilities had recently been adopted.

84. In its efforts to promote inclusion, Peru had embarked on a series of consultations with persons with disabilities prior to the adoption of relevant programmes and policies. One such policy offered legal support to safeguard the rights, wishes and preferences of persons with disabilities.

85. Recognizing persons with disabilities as a rich part of the diversity of humankind, and their potential to be agents of change, Peru reaffirmed its commitment to implementing cross-cutting disability-aware polices and urged the international community to raise disability awareness and promote inclusive sustainable development.

86. **Ms. Juan López** (Mexico) said that her Government was firmly committed to the implementation of the Convention and had submitted its second and third consolidated reports to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Those reports contained substantive information about the relevant national actions, plans, programmes and legislative frameworks adopted by Mexico in the context of its compliance with the Convention.

87. Mexico had made significant progress in establishing its national system for the development and inclusion of persons with disabilities. In that regard a multidimensional inclusion strategy had been adopted to combine the efforts and resources of the Government and civil society with a view to reducing the poverty gap. In terms of concrete achievements, her Government had managed to lower the barriers to access to health services from 16.4 percent in 2014 to 12 per cent in 2016; barriers to access to education from 51.1 per cent in 2014 to 48 per cent in 2016; and persons with disabilities enjoyed increased access to employment, with the 2014 indicator of 32.5 having risen to 39.04 in 2016. Furthermore, registries of persons with disabilities had been integrated, in part through the incorporation of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability. With 4 million people having been identified thus far, work on statistical analysis was forthcoming. The National Council for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was strengthening the institutional work undertaken to meet relevant commitments, in particular the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

88. **Mr. Pintus** (Observer for Progetto Filippide), drawing attention to articles 6, 7 and 30 of the Convention, which pertained to the interests of women and children with disabilities and ensuring access to recreation, said that the inclusion of such persons was a particular priority for Progetto Filippide — a sports programme for persons with autism and rare diseases. The specific right to sport for persons with disabilities, particularly young women and girls, would be addressed at a conference on sports and inclusion to be held later in the year in Rome, which he invited all Committee members to attend.

89. **Ms. Mlakar** (Slovenia) said that her Government was committed to implementing the Convention and its Optional Protocol. In line with its Constitution and the precepts of the Constitutional Court, Slovenia had taken steps to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoyed equality and led decent lives, including through the adoption of the Protection against Discrimination Act and the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act. The Government had also recently passed the Personal Assistance Act, which allowed persons with a variety of impairments to receive help with tasks and activities that could not otherwise be completed, thus allowing them to live more independent and active lives.

90. Her Government would continue its efforts to achieve greater social integration of persons with disabilities and to improve the regulation of disability-related issues. To that end, even closer cooperation would be needed between ministries, governmental institutions, organizations of persons with disabilities and other stakeholders.

91. **Ms. Covalschi** (Argentina) said that greater effort should be made to ensure that persons with disabilities fully enjoyed their rights, particularly with respect to economic and social participation and inclusion. Since ratifying the Convention Argentina had worked to mainstream its principles into national legislation. In that context, a national disability agency had been created in 2017 to ensure greater autonomy and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities while improving their quality of life.

92. Under the 2017 national disability plan, her Government had sought to elaborate policies that promoted the full social inclusion of persons with disabilities. In that context, an interministerial commission on disability had been created to improve

coordinated efforts to ensure full participation by, and equal rights for, all persons with disabilities. Moreover, in implementing the 2030 Agenda, the entire international community had a unique opportunity to mainstream a disability perspective in public policy with a view to achieving sustainable, inclusive and rights-based development.

93. **Ms. Grau** (Uruguay) said that her Government was committed to creating a country where persons with disabilities could effectively exercise their rights. An arsenal of social reform, cross-cutting policies and relevant programmes and institutions, among others, would safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, ensure their access to justice and legal protection, increase their autonomy and augment the visibility of the challenges they faced. For example, under the national disability programme, a three-pronged project had been implemented to systematize the collection of data, address violence and disability, with an emphasis on gender violence, and provide universal access to health care.

94. Uruguay had achieved progress in instituting a national integrated system of care, mainstreaming disability and a gender perspective in policies, implementing provisions for mothers with disabilities, and providing health care, education and employment. Her Government would continue the process begun with its ratification of the Convention, ensuring that issues of disability were mainstreamed in ministry policies.

95. **Mr. Duarte Lopes** (Portugal) said that his Government was strongly committed to implementing the Convention. Two measures announced at the previous year's Conference had yielded positive results: 75,000 persons with disabilities were now covered by the social provision for inclusion, a number that was set to increase to 160,000 beneficiaries by the end of 2018; and the new model of support for independent living had led to the establishment of countrywide centres to assist persons with disabilities in their daily activities.

96. Portugal had an inclusive school system that integrated 98 per cent of students with special needs. His Government was working to tackle all remaining situations of non-inclusion and had tasked a working group to present a legislative proposal focusing on student potential rather than deficits. That proposal would guarantee the flexible management of the curriculum, allowing students to complete 12 years of mandatory education. It also reinforced the rights of students and their families to be actively involved in the educational process.

97. Well-tailored integrated policies were necessary to effectively respond to the challenges and constraints faced by persons with disabilities. Only in that way could the international community ensure that no one was left behind and that disability and diversity were handled in a positive manner.

98. **Mr. Zehnder** (Switzerland) said that his Government had understood the importance of international collaboration, its application to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities having produced many fruitful exchanges with State party representatives. Cooperation between the various treaty bodies was important to ensure the cross-cutting implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities and to consolidate the link between the Convention and other human rights treaties. However, collaboration among various actors at the national level was also crucial. For persons with disabilities to lead autonomous lives, they must be able to make choices for themselves. That meant including them, their representative organizations and all relevant public and private partners so that the services provided were sufficiently flexible and adapted to individual needs. Thus, cooperation at both the national and international levels was essential in order to develop solutions and advance the full implementation of the Convention.

99. **Mr. Kagonye** (Zimbabwe) said that his country had made progress in enacting legislation compliant with the Convention since ratifying it in 2013. For example, the Disabled Persons Act provided for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, while the Labour Act had been amended in line with the Convention to incorporate international labour standards. In addition, a department had been created to handle disability issues. His Government was also establishing a national database for persons with disabilities and, under Zimbabwe Agenda for Socioeconomic Transformation, was dedicating resources to improve the lives of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. Some 10 per cent of the Basic Education Assistance Module was being allocated to increase access to education for children with disabilities, and his Government was making ongoing efforts to raise awareness and educate the nation at large at national events. One such event was a campaign launched in conjunction with a local mining company to demystify misconceptions and myths about albinism.

100. **Ms. Heumann** (Observer for Humanity and Inclusion) said that, after 35 years as Handicap International, the organization had recently changes its name to Humanity and Inclusion in order to better reflect the diversity of its mandate. Guided by a people-centred approach, Humanity and Inclusion supported the efforts of persons with disabilities, representative

organizations, service providers and States in the implementation of the Convention with a view to achieving fully inclusive societies.

101. Humanity and Inclusion specifically supported the implementation of the Convention by actively contributing to the goal of leaving no one behind and to disaster risk reduction efforts. Other key projects included work with women with disabilities to tackle the violence and discrimination they experienced; the upcoming release of a report on the intersectionality of gender and disability; and collaboration with the Washington Group to improve disability inclusion in data and statistics. The organization's inclusive political participation projects empowered affected populations in gathering evidence for accountability.

102. Welcoming the election to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of Ms. Ana Peláez Narváez, the first woman with a disability to serve on that Committee, she also wished to congratulate the numerous other women with disabilities who had just been elected to serve on the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

103. **Mr. Somsri** (Thailand) said that his Government had fulfilled 80 per cent of its commitment under the employment quota system for persons with disabilities and was intent on reaching 100 per cent through job coaching. He also wished to point out the draft amendments had been proposed to the National Copyright Act, moving the Thai Government closer to ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. Furthermore, the Second Strategic Plan on the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities was being implemented across the country, and a database on persons with disabilities was linked to civil registration and the public health-care system. Lastly, Thailand was continuing to work closely with organizations of persons with disabilities and intended to push forward an agenda to mainstream disability issues in 2019 as Chair of ASEAN.

104. **Mr. Locsin, Jr.** (Philippines) said that his Government recognized persons with disabilities as both agents and beneficiaries of development who had the potential to make outstanding contributions to society. Since ratifying the Convention, the Philippines had made consistent efforts to include persons with disabilities in all State programmes. In addition to ensuring accessibility to all public places for persons with disabilities, his Government had established special education facilities for them, provided them with employment assistance and access to free health care, and had mandated local government units to involve them in the management of the Persons with Disability Affairs Office. Furthermore, persons with disabilities received a distinct identity card awarding them privileges and discounted services and goods; a gender-, development- and disability-based approach was being implemented to integrate disabilities with gender issues; and the Women with Disabilities Day was held on the last Monday of March every year as an opportunity to break common misconceptions and highlight the role of women with disabilities in development.

105. His Government wished to emphasize that the collection of relevant data was critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities and that it looked forward to the coming release of the United Nations flagship report on disability and development.

106. **Mr. Gonzalez** (Colombia) said that, as part of the continued commitment to eradicating all forms of poverty and reducing inequities, it would be necessary to identify and overcome the remaining challenges so that persons with disabilities could fully enjoy their rights and fundamental freedoms. Implementing the 2030 Agenda was also essential in creating conditions conducive to the development of persons with disabilities. Leaving no one behind meant using a development model that empowered such persons and allowed them to become agents of change.

107. Nationally, 86 per cent of persons with disabilities lived in poverty, particularly in rural areas, and 46 per cent participated in social assistance programmes. There was a clear need to focus on that group. The State should not act alone; instead, international and civil society organizations, academia and the private sector should contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

108. With Colombia undergoing one of the most significant processes in its history, his Government knew that only by empowering the various population groups to build a better country could real change be achieved. The process was long and the disparities numerous, but his Government was taking the necessary measures to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities, irrespective of gender, age or type of disability.

109. The international community should look for innovative solutions to old and new challenges, and their implementation should result in improved conditions in each State. Using all the tools available to it, the international community would leave no one behind.

110. **Ms. Díaz Aguirre** (Panama) said that the Convention was leading to a paradigm shift, with the

focus being placed on equality, non-discrimination and the participation persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. Certain factors were known to limit the full implementation of the Convention; for example, women with disabilities faced a high degree of discrimination. In response, her Government had adopted equal opportunities legislation for women that took into account recommendations to protect young girls and adolescents. Furthermore, in response to assertions that there would be a greater number than ever of persons with disabilities by 2030, Panama had enacted legislation to provide protection for that population. It also had concrete policies for employment quotas in the public and private sectors, among other measures.

111. The vicious circle of poverty and disability could be linked to inadequate access to health services. Since 2012, Panama had an electronic system to collect statistics on health and, with regard to the legal capacity of persons with disabilities, a working group had been appointed to revise an amendment to the Civil Code.

112. **Ms. Alharis** (Jordan) said that in 2017 her Government had adopted legislation to combat discrimination against persons with disabilities. As the first such legislation in the region and a model at the international level, it offered a clear definition of disability; criminalized disability-based exclusion; took into account environmental and social obstacles; and recognized temporary disability and the rights arising therefrom.

113. In using the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability to collect data during its latest housing and population census, her Government had ascertained that 11.2 per cent of the population over 5 years of age had a disability. Equipped with that data, it was coordinating the work of various agencies to ensure the full implementation of the relevant legislation, in particular national policies in four priority areas. Steps were also being taken to issue a national identity card later in the year.

114. Her Government's commitment to the 2030 Agenda was reflected in its national development plan, which would strengthen the Jordanian economy and its capacity to provide jobs and health care for all. Her delegation looked forward to presenting the fruits of such initiatives at the next Conference.

115. **Mr. Valero** (Spain) said that Spain had achieved progress in such areas as universal employment and respect for the rights of women and children with disabilities; however, more remained to be done at the national and global levels. While it was important to recognize that the needs of persons with disabilities differed from one country or region to another, one certainty was that they each had a right to autonomy. In Spain, any individual had the right to free assistance, a service made possible by European cooperation.

116. Universal training programmes to prevent disability, assist in rehabilitation, provide access and ensure inclusion in all areas, particularly employment and education, were necessary to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. Discrimination was rampant and persons with disability remained isolated from many opportunities. However, awareness was growing: notably, discussions were taking place in Spain around cognitive accessibility, with relevant initiatives being implemented.

117. **Ms. Bruell-Melchior** (Monaco) said that her Government's policies sought to ensure the full social and economic participation of persons with disabilities through, inter alia, subsidized housing, transport and medical services. Henceforth, newly built apartments were required to be adapted to the needs of persons with reduced mobility. A special family caregiver status had been established to guarantee that families had the necessary safeguards to care for children with disabilities. A disability compensation aid plan was in place for the special education of minor and adults with disabilities. Furthermore, a steering committee monitored the integration and access to employment for workers with disabilities.

118. Given the obstacles regularly faced by persons with disabilities that undermined their economic integration, resources and the exercise of their rights, including the right to be heard, her Government had enacted legal provisions to protect such persons from physical, psychological or sexual violence and from economic obstacles. Professionals in the justice, police, medical and social sectors received relevant mandatory training, and persons with disabilities could refer complaints to the High Commissioner for the Protection of Rights, Liberties and for Mediation if they believed themselves to be the victims of discrimination.

119. Lastly, Monaco commemorated the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, held on 3 December every year, as part of its ongoing efforts to raise awareness of disability issues and mobilize sustained support in order to leave no one behind.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.